

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 291

By Crowe

A RESOLUTION to recognize and honor the Johnson City Community Theatre, the longest-running community theater in Tennessee.

WHEREAS, it is with great pleasure that the members of this General Assembly recognize those venerable organizations committed to bringing high-quality art to communities across this State, thereby enriching the lives of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, one such organization is the Johnson City Community Theatre, the longest-running community theater in the State of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the theater group formed in 1885, at which point Johnson City itself had been in existence a mere fourteen years. The young city was not welcoming to the group; preachers in town took to their pulpits, promising hellfire and damnation to anyone who darkened a playhouse door; and

WHEREAS, more than half a century later in 1912, the group, then known as the Johnson City Dramatic Society, put on its first production, *An American Girl*, at the VA Memorial Theater; that year and each year thereafter, the group performed at least three shows annually, making it the oldest continuously running theater organization in the State and one of the oldest in the country; and

WHEREAS, in those early days, the theater groups were nomadic; in addition to the VA Memorial Theater, the group performed plays at the Johnson City Country Club, St. John's Episcopal Church, Old North Junior High, and Munsey Memorial United Methodist Church, which had, it would seem, rescinded its doomsday diatribes in the days since the theater group's inception; and

WHEREAS, in 1924, theater meeting minutes indicate that Mary Gump was elected the first president of the Johnson City Little Theatre Guild; dues were two dollars for the first year, and guild players continued to perform in various venues throughout town until 1956, when the group found a permanent home at the former Temple Baptist Church at 600 E. Maple Street, which is still the address of the theater today; and

WHEREAS, the first production mounted at the newly acquired permanent edifice was *The Curious Savage*, directed by Darryl Frank, wife of Bud Frank, for whom East Tennessee State University's theater is named; and

WHEREAS, in 1967, with Cheryl Laws as president, the theater group's name was changed once more, this time to its current moniker, the Johnson City Community Theatre; and

WHEREAS, throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, the Johnson City Community Theatre continued to grow as Johnson City grew; new generations of actors, directors, and theater technicians took part in the thriving organization, continuing and contributing to the legacy that began in 1885; and

WHEREAS, with over 129 years of history and more than a century of continuous seasons, the Johnson City Community Theatre continues to foster artistic excellence and bring quality entertainment to the people of East Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, the Johnson City Community Theatre is a true Tennessee treasure, and it is fitting that the organization be recognized; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED TENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we recognize and honor the Johnson City Community Theatre, a true Tennessee treasure, on its impressive and enduring legacy as the longest-running community theater in the State, extend our gratitude for the theater's commitment to purveying exceptional performance art, and wish the organization much continued success in the future.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.